

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
Serving in the Capacity as the County Committee on School District Organization

Contra Costa County Office of Education
The Ronald L. Stewart Center
77 Santa Barbara Road, Pleasant Hill, California

April 9, 2003

A meeting of the County Committee on School District Organization was called to order at 6:01 p.m. with the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

- ROLL CALL** Pamela Mirabella, Cheryll LeMay, Daniel Gomes, Daniel Borsuk, and Glenn Ruley
- ABSENT** None.
- CHAIR** Cheryll A. LeMay, Ed.D.
- OTHERS** Ellen Elster and Laura Dorsey Huerta, County Office staff; Gary McHenry, Gary Eberhart, Linda Mayo, Dick and Vicki Allen, Barton E. Krasner, Susan Berg, Connie Tolleson, Barbara Sandoval, Jeff Stover, Joe Aliling, Virginia Bowman, Judy Dawson, Gloria Magleby, AJ Fardella, Vicki Zumwalt, Mary Jane Walker, Roger Bylund. A partial list of attendees is on file at the County Office of Education.
- APPROVAL OF MINUTES** The minutes of February 6, 2001, were approved as presented (M/S: Borsuk/Mirabella).
- STAFF COMMENT:** Deputy Superintendent Ellen Elster, in her capacity as staff member to the County Committee on School District Organization, reviewed the procedures for the public hearing. Mrs. Elster explained the process to date, noted that public hearings would be held tonight in the Board Room of the Contra Costa County Office of Education in Pleasant Hill and at Riverview Middle School in Bay Point, and informed everyone that the County Committee would render its decision in this matter at 6:00 p.m. on May 7, 2003, in the County Office of Education's Board Room in Pleasant Hill. She also explained that the County Committee has allotted 20 minutes for presentations from the community speaking in favor of selecting an alternative method of electing governing board members and 20 minutes for presentations in opposition to selecting an alternative method.
- PUBLIC HEARING**
Comments Received in Pleasant Hill At 6:02 p.m., Chairperson Cheryll LeMay opened the public hearing on the petition received from the Bay Point Municipal Advisory Council to select an alternative method of electing governing board members for the Mt. Diablo Unified School District. The presenters in favor of the alternative method agreed to speak first at this hearing and to speak after the presenters in opposition to the alternative method at the second hearing scheduled in Bay Point. Speaking in favor of selecting an alternative method of electing governing board members were the following: Vicki Zumwalt, a member of the Bay Point Municipal Advisory Council; Gloria Magleby, chair of the Bay Point Municipal Advisory Council; Judy Dawson, a member of the Bay Point Municipal Advisory Council; Jeff Stover, a parent and member of the Bay Point Municipal Advisory Council; and Connie Tolleson, a parent of a high school student in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District. Speakers in favor of selecting an alternative method of electing governing board members presented the following arguments: senators, assemblymembers, county supervisors, and many town councilmembers are elected by district; it is important to have a representative who knows and understands Bay Point's issues and concerns intimately; Senator Torlakson, Assemblymember Canciamilla, and Supervisor Glover have sent letters indicating their support; a local representative would advocate for Bay Point; most Bay Point residents do not know any of the MDUSD school board members, since they do not live in Bay Point; the performance of the current MDUSD school board members has been excellent, but because there are no guarantees that future board members will treat the Bay Point community as fairly as the current board members, continuity should be established by way of ensuring that there will always be a representative from the Bay Point area on the board; the MDUSD's efforts to improve educational

opportunities in Bay Point have been recent and those efforts may change at any moment; the school board members, because they do not live in East County, do not understand the impact of their decisions on personal lives, such as how driving over the hill to Concord to a child's school three times a day might be a burden to a parent in Bay Point or how the backed-up and oftentimes dangerous traffic in East County could impact those trips over the hill (especially when new teenaged drivers are involved); MDUSD school board members may be unaware of happenings in East County in general, since they live in Central County, so that their decisions are not based on all available information; it was alleged that there is a high dropout rate for high school students from Bay Point. Speaking in opposition to selecting an alternative method of electing governing board members were the following: MDUSD Superintendent Gary McHenry, MDUSD Board President Gary Eberhart, MDUSD Board Member Linda Mayo, and Barbara Sandoval, parent of a MDUSD graduate. MDUSD Superintendent Gary McHenry began by presenting a Powerpoint presentation on statistics and historical data of the Mt. Diablo Unified School District as well as specific information on services provided to the Bay Point community. Other speakers in opposition to selecting an alternative method of electing governing board members then presented the following arguments: communication and partnering with the Bay Point community has improved; electing board members at large serves to make the board work as a team and minimizes political in-fighting by making trustees responsible to all students and schools, not just those in their own neighborhoods; if board members were elected by area, the Bay Point community would suffer from having only one trustee to represent them instead of an at-large board that would protect their interests as it does the interests of the entire district; the actions and boardsmanship of the current trustees and administration within the MDUSD board room are a testimony to the trustees' commitment to students of Bay Point; there is recent evidence that shows that even unknown candidates are able to win elections; the County Committee was urged to consider the welfare of all students in the Mt. Diablo USD and not the interests of nine individual communities (which make up the district); and the Oakland Unified School District was offered as an example of a poorly run district whose board is elected by area rather than at large. In addition, Barbara Sandoval noted that she acts as the MDUSD board's watchdog to ensure that trustees address the needs of all children in the district, and it is her opinion that the current form of representation is working well. Chairperson LeMay closed the public hearing at 6:54 p.m. and announced that the County Committee meeting would reconvene for the second part of the hearing at 7:30 p.m. at Riverview Middle School's multipurpose room, 205 Pacifica Avenue, Bay Point, California.

PUBLIC HEARING
Comments Received in Bay Point

At 7:33 p.m., Chairperson LeMay announced that the meeting of the Contra Costa County Committee on School District Organization had now reconvened, and she immediately opened the public hearing at the Riverview Middle School in Bay Point on the petition received from the Bay Point Municipal Advisory Council to select an alternative method of electing governing board members for the Mt. Diablo Unified School District. Speaking in opposition to selecting an alternative method of electing governing board members were the following: MDUSD Superintendent Gary McHenry, MDUSD Board President Gary Eberhart, MDUSD Board Member Linda Mayo, and AJ Fardella. MDUSD Superintendent Gary McHenry once again presented the Powerpoint presentation and provided specific information on services provided to the Bay Point community. A new argument offered by MDUSD Board President Gary Eberhart in opposition to selecting an alternative method of electing governing board members was that student feeder patterns from elementary to middle to high schools would require that a student move from one trustee's electoral area to another's electoral area so the students in each community that trustees would represent would constantly change. Mr. AJ Fardella submitted copies of a letter he'd written to the County Committee and addressed the points therein; namely, that, although he was part of the original group that gathered signatures to request an alternative method of electing governing board members, he now feels that the MDUSD board and administration are more responsive to the community needs of Bay Point and parts of Pittsburg. He also stated that, with the very tough decisions facing the MDUSD in the near future, regionalizing elections at this point may be counterproductive and that, with the dramatic increase in voters due to anticipated new developments in Bay Point/West Pittsburg, representation on the board from those areas will become more of a possibility over time. MDUSD trustee Linda Mayo argued that the Bay Point petitioners have not indicated how students district-wide would benefit from an election by special interest areas and noted that Bay Point residents are comfortable contacting any and all MDUSD trustees. Additionally, she argued that she, as well as the other MDUSD trustees, work very hard

to become acquainted with all communities in the district and that it requires a lot of effort on each trustee's part to stay informed about the entire district. Speaking in favor of selecting an alternative method of electing governing board members were the following: Gloria Magleby, chair of the Bay Point Municipal Advisory Council; Judy Dawson, a member of the Bay Point Municipal Advisory Council; Virginia Bowman, and Jeff Stover, a parent and a member of the Bay Point Municipal Advisory Council. Virginia Bowman argued that, from her experience as someone who lived near Northgate High School in Central County and later moved to the Bay Point community, the MDUSD school board does not offer balanced services across the district and that the Bay Point community receives less of its focus and attention. The other speakers reiterated their arguments; however, it was noted by Ms. Magleby that unless the voters of the school district are allowed to vote on this issue, there is no way to know which method (at large vs. elected by area) the community prefers; and Mr. Stover noted that all of Bay Point's schools have scored in the lowest one-quarter of the API test scores in the school district. Chairperson LeMay closed the public hearing at 8:18 p.m. Dr. LeMay also announced that the Contra Costa County Committee on School District Organization would render its decision on this matter at 6:00 p.m. on May 7, 2003, at the County Office of Education, Board Room, 77 Santa Barbara Road, Pleasant Hill, California.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

Joseph A. Ovick, Ed.D., Ex Officio Secretary
County Board of Education

These unadopted minutes are summaries and excerpts from the special meeting of April 9, 2003, and are subject to amendment and/or correction prior to the approval of the County Committee on School District Organization.